

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JOHANN 00948 161601Z

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 PA-04 PRS-01 USIA-15 CIAE-00

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FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3007

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, SF

SUBJ: IMPRESSIONS OF BRITISH TUC DELEGATION AT END OF FIRST OF
TWO SCHEDULED WEEKS IN SOUTH AFRICA

1. FOLLOWING COMMENTS ARE BASED ON PRESS REPORTS, DISCUSSIONS
WITH TUCSA OFFICIALS AND PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS DURING WEEK TUC
DELEGATION SPENT IN AND AROUND JOHANNESBURG. CONGEN WILL OFFER
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS WHEN DELEGATION COMPLETES SOUTH AFRICAN
TOUR BUT CLEAR IMPRESSION AT THIS POINT IS THAT DELEGATION HAS
GIVEN TOP PRIORITY TO EFFORTS TO CONVINCE WHITE ESTABLISHMENT
THAT TIME HAS COME TO LIBERALIZE ITS POSITION ON BLACK TRADE
UNIONS.

2. THOUGH ORIGINAL PRIMARY OSTENSIBLE PURPOSE OF VISIT WAS TO
LOOK INTO CHARGES THAT CERTAIN BRITISH FIRMS OPERATING
IN SOUTH AFRICA WERE PAYING STARVATION WAGES AND TOLERATING
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SUBSTANDARD WORKING CONDITIONS, DELEGATION MADE NO SECRET OF FACT

UPON ARRIVAL THAT ITS REAL PRIMARY PURPOSE WAS TO DO ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING IT COULD TO PRESSURE SAG INTO GRANTING TRADE UNION RIGHTS TO SOUTH AFRICA'S BLACK WORKERS AT EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE.

3. IN PURSUING THIS PURPOSE DELEGATION MEMBERS (AND LEADER VICTOR FEATHER IN PARTICULAR), OBVIOUSLY CONFIDENT OF POWER THEY HAVE TO INFLUENCE FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO SOUTH AFRICA ONE WAY OR THE OTHER, HAVE BEEN PLAYING GAMES WITH JUST ABOUT EVERYONE: WITH TUCSA, THEIR HOST, BY VIRTUALLY IGNORING FACT IN PREDEPARTURE PRESS STATEMENTS THAT THEY WERE VISITING SOUTH AFRICA AT INVITATION OF TUCSA AND FOLLOWING ARRIVAL IN SOUTH AFRICA, BY AFFECTING SUPERIOR "WE'RE-DOING-YOU-A-BIG-FAVOR" ATTITUDE TOWARD TUCSA; WITH PRIME MINISTER VORSTER BY USING ONE OF OLDEST DEBATING TRICKS IN WORLD TO SUGGEST IN PUBLIC THAT HE HAD AGREED WITH THEIR POSITION ON TRADE UNIONS FOR BLACKS DURING MEETING (WHEN THEY KNEW AS WELL AS ANYBODY THAT HE HADN'T); WITH ANGLO-AMERICAN MANAGERS AND WHITE TRADE UNIONISTS AT PRESIDENT BRAND GOLD MINE IN ORANGE FREE STATE WHEN (OBVIOUSLY PLAYING TO GALLERY BACK IN BRITAIN) THEY PRETENDED TO BE SURPRISED THAT BLACK MINE WORKERS WERE NOT ORGANIZED IN TRADE UNIONS.

4. AFRIKAANS NEWSPAPERS TRANSVALER AND VADERLAND HAVE CHARGED DELEGATION WITH MEDDLING IN SOUTH AFRICA'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. THIS IT CERTAINLY HAS DONE WITH CONSIDERABLE APPARENT RELISH. NOT WISHING TO ANTAGONIZE INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION MOVEMENT ANY MORE THAN NECESSARY, HOWEVER, IN WAKE OF UNANIMOUSLY-PASSED ANTI-SOUTH AFRICA ILO RESOLUTION LAST JUNE, SAG HAS PLAYED IT COOL AND MADE NO APPARENT EFFORTS TO IMPEDE DELEGATION IN ANY WAY.
DEGRACE

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